(c) The Government does not propose to supply gas at a concessional price of Rs. 600 per thousand cubic metre to other industries in Assam.

Refixation of prices of P.D.S. commodities

5040. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to refix/revise the prices of essential commodities under P.D.S. to a reasonable level, so as to give some relief to the people living below the poverty line, as well as in the drought- affected States; and

(b) whether Government have laid down any criteria for refixation as to who are the people covered under poverty line in the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SHRIRAM CHAUHAN): (a) As a result of the recent modification made in PDS, the BPL families will have a net saving in their family food budget since the monthly quota of wheat and rice has been doubled from 10 kg. to 20 kg. with effect from the 1st April, 2000. According to the estimates, the revision in the prices alongwith doubling the entitlement of BPL families will effectively transfer 41% more resources to the poor. Government feels that these measures advance the cause of poor.

(b) In the guidelines for implementation of TPDS the States/UTs have been requested as follows:

(i) The thrust should be to include only the really poor and vulnerable sections of the society such as landless agricultural labourers, marginal farmers, rural artisans/craftsmen, such as porters, tappers, weavers, blacksmiths, carpenters, etc. in the rural areas and slum dwellers, persons earning their livelihood on daily basis in the informal sector like porters, rickshaw pullers, hand-cart pullers, fruit and flower sellers on the pavements, etc. in urban areas. The categories so listed are only by way of illustration and is not in no way an exhaustive list of those who could be brought within the ambit of BPL population.

(ii) The quinquennial BPL census made at the instance of the Ministry of Rural Development for implementation of IRDP can be a basis and the guidelines issued by that Ministry for BPL survey may be adopted. However, the overall number of BPL families identified should be limited to the estimates

of Planning Commission based on the Expert Group methodology adopted by the Government of India for TPDS.

(iii) Gram Panchayats and Gram Sabhas should be involved in the identification of eligible families below poverty line.

Removal of ceilings on foodgrains stock

5041. SHRI ABANI ROY: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have decided to remove ceilings on foodgrains stock throughout the country;

(b) if so, whether restrictions on the movement of food grains from one State to another have also been lifted;

(c) if so, whether removal of such restrictions has encouraged black-marketing and hoarding of foodgrains throughout the country; and

(d) if so, the steps taken by Government to check such trend?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SHRIRAM CHAUHAN): (a) As per Central Government's present policy, there exists no stock- limits on rice and coarsegrains. However, in the case of rice, the State Governments of Andhra Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir and Tamil Nadu are still keeping stock limits on account of local conditions. As regards wheat, taking an overall view of the food situation and also the major storage constraints being faced all over the country, in April 1999, Central Government advised all the States/ UTs to abolish stock-limits on wheat and wheat products. Subsequently, in September' 99 we advised all the States/UTs to reimpose the stock limits on wheat and wheat products, with a view to check the rising trend in their open market prices, if the situation so warrants.

(b) In March, 1993, Central Government adopted the national policy of treating the entire country as a single food zone for free movement of foodgrains so that the farmers could get remunerative prices of their products anywhere in the country. All the StatesUTs., excepting Andhra Pradesh, J&K, West Bengal and Tamil Nadu, have taken action to adhere to this national policy. These four States want to keep the movement restrictions on paddy/ rice with a view to maximizing procurement.

(c) No such instance has come to our notice.

(d) Does not arise.